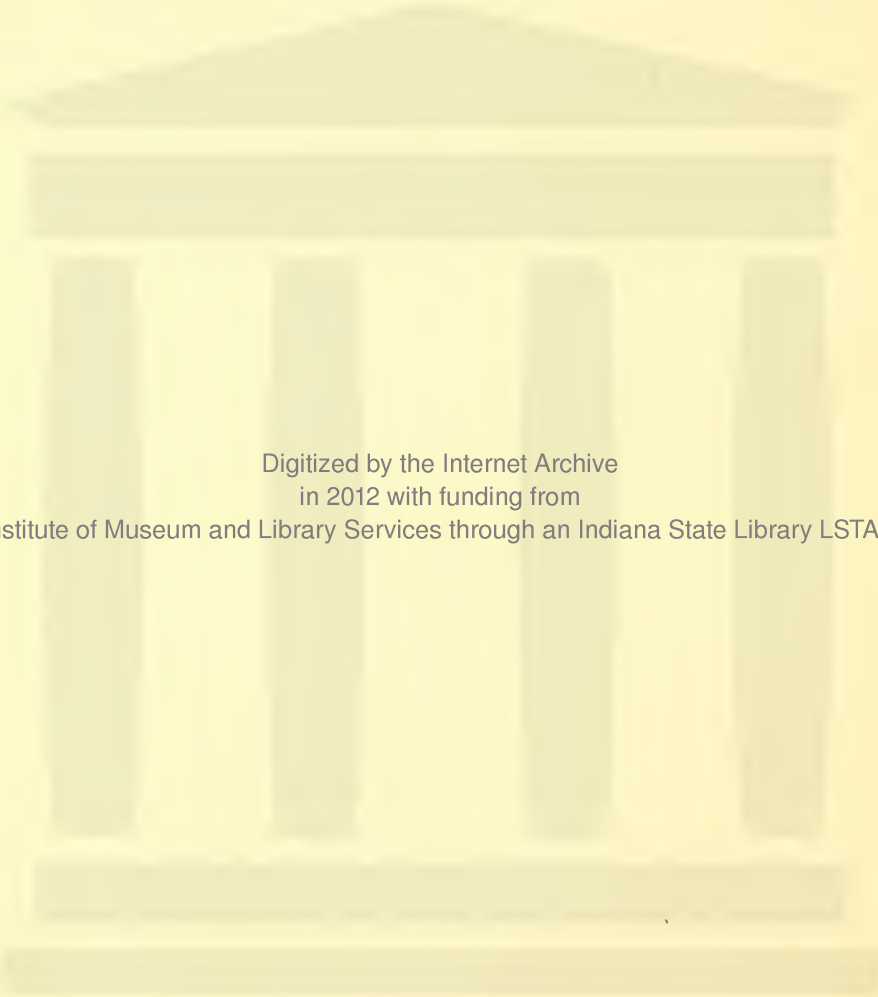




WALLED IN.

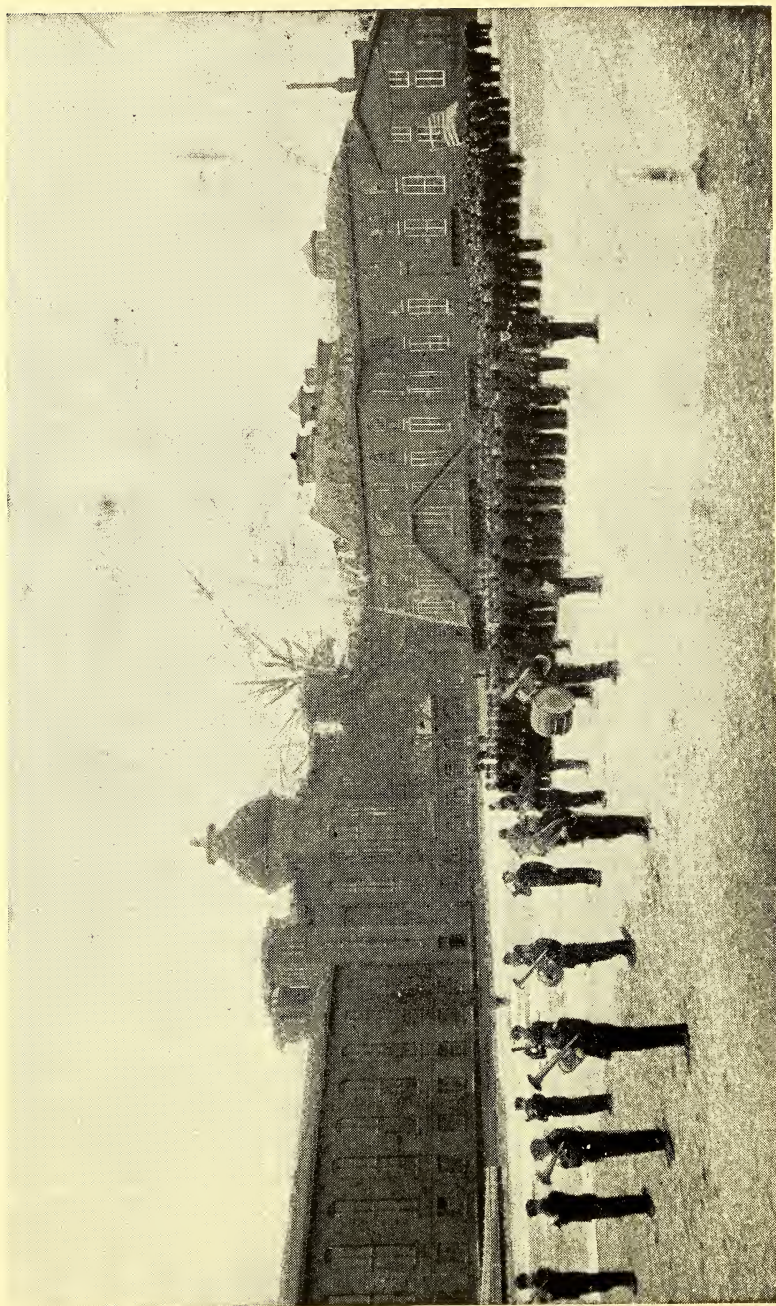
WILLIAM
O.
STODDARD



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THE WALLED IN REGIMENT.

Walled In

A True Story of Randall's Island

BY

William O. Stoddard

AUTHOR OF

"Dab Kinzer," "Crowded out of Crowfield,"
"Saltillo Boys," etc., etc.

Illustrated



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CONTENTS

CHAP.	PAGE
I. THE HIGH STONE WALL	9
II. SUPPER TIME	20
III. EVENING VISITORS	31
IV. BEHIND BOLTS AND BARS	42
V. JIM'S PLOT FOR LIBERTY	51
VI. PLANS FOR ACTION	61
VII. ONE PLAN THAT FAILED	70
VIII. NEW IDEAS THAT CAME	80
IX. GETTING OVER THE WALL	91
X. A NEW HOME OF REFUGE	102
XI. JIM'S HIDING PLACE	114
XII. THE STOLEN MONEY	124

ILLUSTRATIONS.

THE WALLED IN REGIMENT. *Frontispiece*

THE SILENT PRINTING OFFICE. *Facing p. 48*

THEY ALL STOOD STILL WHILE THE DRUM
BEAT. “ “ 82

Walled In

I

THE HIGH STONE WALLS

WHEN the world was made, a number of islands were loosely scattered around at the mouth of the Hudson River. To this day, the old river works steadily on, trying to change the saltness of the Atlantic by pouring in fresh water, and trying to widen its own mouth by washing away these islands, but the ocean is as salt as it was a thousand years ago and the islands are of about the same size that they ever were, so far as anybody can see. When they were put there, however, and for nobody knows how long afterward, there was not a boy or girl to have been found upon either of them, while nowadays there are swarms and swarms,

Walled In

from every nation this side of Asia, and they are of all sorts and sizes.

Some of the ways and doings of those boys and girls cannot be rightly told without first asking those who are to hear the story to take a look at a map of New York City and of the land and water around it. The map shows everything pretty clearly excepting the people and the houses they live in.

One of the boys belonging to this story might have required a sharp search to find him, on a particular morning, early in the spring. Not that he seemed to be hiding, or that he was alone. On the contrary, he stood nearly in the middle of a long line of boys. There were over four hundred of them, dressed all alike, in jackets and trousers of dark, thick gray cloth. Their caps and shoes were of the same pattern, all along the line.

Stationed at intervals, here and there, were boys no larger than the rest, in uniforms of dark, but bright blue cloth, with

The High Stone Walls

red stripes on their arms, and these were officers and this was a battalion, and it was marching briskly forward to the spirited music of half a dozen drums and several shrill fifes.

It was a kind of charge, across the level, gravelly parade-ground, and the boys were marching well, but right before them stood a high and frowning stone wall and it was of no use to charge against it. It could neither be broken through nor climbed and this one boy, in the middle of the line, was staring at it as if he hated it, while he marched. His feet kept time with the music and perfect pace with the feet of the other boys, but there was an angry look in his black eyes and a hot flush on his face, as if the wall had spoken to him, saying something to rouse his temper and make him answer back. What he did say, was, in a whisper that the next boy to him heard :

“ I will !—See if I don’t ! ”

“ What ? ” whispered the other boy.

Walled In

“I’ll go over it, some day.”

“I’ll go with you, then. I can climb anything you can——”

“*Halt!*”

The clear-voiced command was at that instant heard, all along the line, and every boy stood still in his tracks.

They were a pretty well drilled battalion.

“About,—*face!*”

In an instant the long, double lines stood, with their backs to the wall and facing the parade-ground.

Away out in the middle of it stood the commander, the drill-master of that very remarkable battalion. He was a handsome, pleasant eyed man, of about twenty-five, dressed in a trim blue uniform, very like that of a United States Army officer. He was really a naval officer, detailed there by the Government to be practically the colonel of a regiment of pretty wild boys. He was there to teach them discipline, order, obedience, only a shade or so more strictly than if

The High Stone Walls

they had been cadets at West Point, or the Naval Academy at Annapolis.

Other commands had been given and obeyed, and the entire force was now marching around the broad enclosure by companies, six of them, and each company was composed of boys of nearly the same height.

The first company consisted of boys, the oldest of whom may have been eighteen, and the rear company was made up of little fellows as young as twelve, or even younger.

Very nearly all of them, white or colored, moved as if they liked the idea of being young soldiers, but they had not been recruited like other soldiers. Some of them were there because they had no other home to go to nor any other school to be taught in. Many, however, were there for other reasons. For instance, that tall young fellow in command of the foremost company. The captain, in bright, blue uniform who handled his men so well. He is here for highway robbery and it will be a long time before

Walled In

they let him out, although he is one of the best behaved boys in the House of Refuge. He is not here altogether as a punishment, however, nor are any of his companions, no matter what their fault was. This is not a place of judgment, but of help and hope, and, not long ago, a well-known literary man, after inspecting the whole institution, said to the Superintendent :

“Sir, this is one of the footprints of Christ on earth. It is an effort, in His name, to seek and to save that which was lost.”

“Thank God !” replied the officer. “About eighty-five out of every hundred do well and become good citizens. We keep track of them, long after they leave us.”

Nevertheless, the House of Refuge has to be a kind of prison. It is on Randall's Island, separated from the city of New York, on Manhattan Island, by a swiftly running branch of the East River, which is not a river at all, but an arm of the sea, and its rapid current is made by the changing tides.

The High Stone Walls

If, in one view, this is a prison, in another it is a great boarding school, with very remarkable appliances for the education and discipline of its pupils.

The entire enclosure, of which the parade-ground is a part, contains several acres. The stone wall, twenty feet high, in front of which the battalion halted, guards all of one of the sides of the enclosure and parts of two other sides.

The remaining lengths of those two are protected just as well by high buildings but on the southern side a tall chimney sticks up from a range of buildings that are not so high. They contain a steam engine, machinery and several kinds of workshops.

The drill was long and must have been tiresome, particularly to the boy who carried and pounded the big, bass drum and to the other boy who carried the flag. It all but blew him over, more than once, for there were sharp gusts of March wind, now and then. He looked relieved, very much so,

Walled In

when the battalion at last halted on the side nearest the green lawn and the buildings, and was ordered to "break ranks."

That command dispersed the young soldiers and sent them off to fun of their own making, just as the order to assemble for drill had found them, scattered here and there. It had not been a regular "school day" and none of them had been in the vast schoolroom in the main building, busy with books. At the moment when the military instructor's whistle had sounded, a brisk game of base ball had been going on in the ball ground, next to the parade-ground. On that itself, a number of knots of boys had been skylarking. Most of them had been indoors, however, and of these, some had been in the conservatory, learning to be gardeners ; others in the printing shop ; in the tailor-shop ; in the shoe-shop ; in the stocking factory ; in the carpenter shop ; in the rope and matting shop ; and so on. It was not the season for farm work

The High Stone Walls

and none had been away outside, on the island farm learning to be farmers as they soon were to be, later in the spring. Moreover, the model ship, in front of the main building, toward the East River, had a deserted look, but it was waiting for the boys to come, crew after crew, and play sailors under the nautical instructor. In that way many of them were to get themselves ready to go to sea, really some day.

Jim, the boy who had hated the wall, had been in the printing shop, and he had walked out of it with a look on his face as if he did not care much for drill or for printing or for anything else. He was a tall, wiry looking boy, of not much over fourteen, and he might have seemed even good looking if he had not been so downcast. That was hardly the right word for it, either, for right along with what some people might have mistaken for sullenness was another look that was full of the most determined pluck. It had stuck to his face during drill-time and had grown

Walled In

stronger when he stared at the wall. It was there now, as he walked along with the other boys, toward the entrance of the shop buildings.

"I don't belong here!" came out in another whisper, that nobody heard. "I never did it! I never did it! I've been here long enough! I won't stay any longer. I'm going to climb that wall, somehow. I'm going to be free and go where I choose!"

That was it. He was struggling with a sense of injustice, in some way done him, and it was stirred up to unusual bitterness by a longing for freedom. It was as natural as breathing to hate to be shut in and to hate the wall and to study how it could be climbed over, and to dream of all the wonderful things beyond it.

"Jim!" said a boy of his own size who was walking with him. "You can't do it! —You can't even get a chance to try.—Then, if you did get out, there's the East River to cross and we never could swim it. What's

The High Stone Walls

more, if we got to New York, we'd be known by our clothes and the cops would catch us and send us back. It's no use!"

"I will, though," said Jim. "You see if I don't. I don't belong here!"

And then he added, in his hot and angry thoughts, but not aloud:

"I've been here a whole year and I ought not to have been sent here. I didn't do it!—I never stole a cent of that money,—I don't care what they say.—When I get out, though, I won't go back to uncle John's house. He's as hard as flint. Aunt Betty isn't, though. I'd like to see her. She tried to keep me from being sent here."

II

SUPPER TIME

No boy has ears keen enough to hear a woman who is speaking fifty miles away from him. Nevertheless, Jim might have been glad to hear what a woman was saying, in a farmhouse away up the Hudson, at the very moment when the battalion he was in was halted in front of the wall. She was a kindly faced, middle aged woman, and she was speaking with more energy than seemed naturally to belong to her, for she did not look energetic.

"John Bronson," she said, "I suppose you did what you thought was right, but I never did believe Jim took that money!"

"Well!" sharply responded a large, heavy looking man, who sat near her. "You are all wrong! Nobody else could possibly have taken it. The court said so. Jim was the

Supper Time

only one who could have got at it, anyhow. Besides, he was seen a spending money in the village, too. He took it."

"I'll never believe it!" she said. "I don't care how they made it look. He never confessed it, either."

"Jim always was obstinate, and you know it," said her husband, sternly. "He never would give in. The House of Refuge men 'll bring him to his senses, though. He'll learn something, there."

"He has been there a whole year," she said, sadly enough. "O, how I want to see him, sometimes!"

Something else cut off the talk about Jim, at that point. He did not hear the remarks of Aunt Betty, or Uncle John, but it was just as impossible for any boy or girl on Randall's Island,—for there were many girls there,—to have heard what people were saying, over in the great city, so near at hand. Part of that city of New York is on Manhattan Island, but a larger part, with not

Walled In

nearly so many people in it, is on the mainland, above the arm of the sea known as Harlem River. It begins just above the upper end of Randall's Island.

Away up in that new part of the city, a girl of about Jim's age, and a boy who may have been a little older but was no taller, were standing in front of another kind of stone wall and were talking about it.

This wall was about twelve feet high and was roughly made, with a rugged face, very different from the smooth finish of the barrier around the parade-ground. In fact it was nothing at all but the side of a new street. An old road which once had run along there had been contented to go down into a hollow and come up again on the higher ground beyond. Now, however, that the city had spread out and taken in all that land, it had been best to make a level. All high places were cut down and across all low places the streets were carried on "viaducts." These left the ground on either side of such

Supper Time

a street away down below it, looking more of a hollow than ever.

One of these streets was a broad avenue, promising to be good looking after it was finished, but very ugly now. It was so much wider than the old road it was taking the place of that it cut off an old front yard entirely, and the house there which had been a number of feet from its old front gate was now almost exactly on a line with the stone wall at the edge of the avenue. That was the reason why the girl looked hard at the wall and at the house and then turned to the boy, exclaiming:

“Why, Rodney Nelson! Your folks are just walled in! How on earth are you going to get out?”

It looked like it, for the side streets, crossing the avenue at the ends of the square, were built up in the same way and on the fourth side, to which their backs were turned, were the backs of a solid row of buildings, fronting upon another avenue.

Walled In

"You can't get over that wall," said Rodney. "Billy's tried it, everywhere, and he can climb anything that isn't straight up and down."

He seemed to be pretty cheerful about it, nevertheless, whoever Billy might be.

"Tell you what," she said, "you can come across and get out through our house and the shop, till you can put up some stairs, or a ladder."

"Guess we'll have to," replied Rodney, "but Billy's got to stay at home, now. They finished the last of that wall, this morning. Come on upstairs and see how mother's going to get in, this evening."

In half a minute more they were up in the room over the parlor and she at once remarked:

"O! I see! your mother'll climb in at the second story windows."

"She won't have to climb," said Rodney. "Look here."

The Nelson house was old, but it was not

Supper Time

large. That second story had but four rooms, two of them of good size, two of them, at each end of its entry, quite small. The large front room, however, had an ample bay window that jutted out, now, almost over the edge of the wall. That was not the window Rodney went to, but the one in the little room on the left, and he had it open in a twinkling.

"There, Millie," he said, "I can nail down some pieces of board and mother can step right in. She won't need any ladder. We can change things around, too, and bring the parlor up here."

"That'll do," said Millie, "but it isn't as good as a door. I wouldn't want to live in a house that's upside down, anyway. That avenue won't be anything but mud, till they pave it and put in the sidewalks. I'm glad we can't be walled in or lose our doors and windows."

"It changes everything for us," said Rodney. "I don't quite know what to make of

Walled In

it, yet, but I've loads of work to do, all day, to have things right when mother comes home."

"So have I!" exclaimed Millie, and away she went, downstairs, to go home across lots, while he stepped out of the window and turned to stare, in a puzzled way, at all of his house that stuck up above the new avenue. It certainly was not the same house it had been, and all the ground around it was walled in, but, after all, Rodney was the same boy.

How about all those other boys, over on Randall's Island? They too were walled in, but were they not the same boys? Did the house they were in change them?

At all events, like Rodney, they had "loads of work to do," all day, until supper time. Then indeed there was a curious kind of coming in to supper, for this, too, was part of their schooling and their discipline.

All over the enclosure and in every workshop, could be heard the tap of a drum.

Supper Time

Everywhere, work stopped. There were minutes of preparation and of "putting away things." Then another drum-tap was heard, and from all directions compact and orderly squads of young fellows began to march toward the great dining-room, supper-room, of the House. Every boy was "tallied," on leaving his place of work, and he was counted again as he went in to supper. Every sentry on duty; every boy in the "office"; promoted there for good behavior; every inmate of the House was at that hour reported and the Superintendent knew where he was and what he was doing.

All but a very few of the boys were either eating supper or taking their regular turns as waiters, under the supervision of a blue-coated gentleman who was all the while explaining the supper management to half a dozen visitors.

The supper was plentiful, of good quality, well cooked, and there was absolute fairness in the way it was served. There were many

Walled In

tables, each large enough for a dozen or so of boys to sit around it comfortably, and each table had its own boy watcher, a kind of corporal, promoted to that post, temporarily, for good conduct. There could be no favoritism shown by the waiters, for among them, to and fro, walked the regular officers of the Institution. Anyhow, the supper of those hundreds of young fellows, so many of whom would otherwise have gone without any supper, was worth anybody's while to go and see, for it suggested something that was said, once: "I was hungry and ye fed Me."

Hundreds of boys, and not a word from one of them, even to his next neighbor, for the rule of the place was that there should be no talking at the table. Therefore, at all of the many tables arranged around the great dining hall, the most noticeable person present was Silence.

So it was, although not so perfectly, at Uncle John Bronson's house, fifty miles

Supper Time

away, up the Hudson, but the silence was broken there, at last.

"John!" exclaimed Aunt Betty. "I can't help thinking of Jim. I wish I knew what he is doing and how they treat him."

"I guess they treat him well enough," he responded, grimly. "But it doesn't do any good for us to talk about him."

"Well, I s'pose it doesn't," she said. "But it seems as if he had lost everything. When a boy is sent to such a place, you take away from him all he has——"

"No, you don't," he exclaimed. "They say it's a good place. Besides, he did it, himself, when he stole the money. He'd always been kind o' reckless and self-willed. I guess he'll learn something."

"When a boy loses his good name, and his self-respect, and his liberty," slowly replied Aunt Betty, looking sorrowfully through the window near her, "I think he loses about everything there is."

Uncle John may have acted from what he

Walled In

thought was a sense of duty, in something he had done concerning Jim, but he looked very uncomfortable, just now. He sat there, with a face that grew redder and redder, all the while Aunt Betty was gone into the kitchen, after the teapot and the other things that belonged to the farmhouse supper-table. It might have been better for them both if Jim had been there, instead of at one of the tables in the House of Refuge.

III

EVENING VISITORS

RODNEY had said enough to Millie to make it plain that his mother was accustomed to go out to work and that she earned barely enough for them to live on. He may have been thinking of that, now, as he stared at his house.

"It's a big avenue," he said, "but mother's got to sell one of our lots to pay off the taxes and assessments for having it done. I don't care if the city does pay for what land they take. It's hard on mother.—She'll be awful tired, but supper's ready. Good one, too. Don't I wish I could find something to do, now I'm out of school? I've tried in dozens of places. Guess there are too many boys.—Hullo!"

"Me b'ye," came at that moment in a deep, good-humored voice, behind him, "what ye

Walled In

want is a dure, where the small windy is. I can put wan in, chape."

"That's what we want, Pat," said Rodney.

"It's a dure was in a building we tore down," said Pat, "and it's a good big wan. All it wants is puttin' in, and a dure step to the walk, wid a good rail, and ye'll be as well aff as iver ye was, wid a foine front on the aveny."

"I'll tell mother," said Rodney, with a keen and hopeful survey of the place where the door was to be.

"'Twon't cost her much," added Pat, "and the likes of her don't want to be climbin' in and out o' windies."

Away he went and Rodney was still considering the matter when he was again spoken to.

"O Rodney! This is dreadful! Seems to me as if they were taking away everything."

"Mother!" exclaimed Rodney. "We'll

Evening Visitors

have a door, there, instead of a window——” and he rapidly explained Pat’s offer.

“Tell him to go ahead!” said Mrs. Nelson. “No matter what it is, so long as it’s a door. But somebody’s neck’ll be broken, yet, tumbling down that wall, into our garden.”

She said that as she was getting in at the window, after Rodney had taken away a bundle she had carried.

“I’ll take it downstairs,” he said, as he followed her. “The parlor’s got to come up here, but we can leave the dining-room where it is, and the kitchen. Billy’s been walking around, all day, at the foot of the wall, trying to find a place to climb out, but there isn’t any.”

At that very moment, a bearded, contented looking face, appeared at the bay window.

“Ba-a-beh!” it remarked.

“Mother!” exclaimed Rodney. “How on earth did that fellow get out? Even a goat can’t climb up and down a wall.”

“I don’t care how he got out,” she re-

Walled In

plied, wearily. "I must have my supper.— O, dear! What are we to do! I feel clean discouraged."

Downstairs they went and both of them seemed to be carrying heavier burdens than the bundle, whatever it was. Rodney had evidently been both housekeeper and cook and a little table was set in the kitchen, handy to the stove and the teapot, but Mrs. Nelson walked straight on and out at the back door.

"How high those walls are!" she said. "Yes, I suppose the Kirbys would let us get out through their place, but I'd rather have a door of my own."

"So would I," said Rodney. "I'll tell Pat to go ahead and put one in, as soon as I can see him, to-morrow."

"Ba-a-beh!" came, just then, in a tone of strong approval, from a friend whose left horn was almost under Rodney's elbow.

"I say, mother," exclaimed Rodney, "how did he get down here again. Guess there's a weak spot in that wall, somewhere."

Evening Visitors

That might be, but Mrs. Nelson was too tired to be interested in goats and walls, and she went into the house. It was a great mystery to her son, however, for he had inspected the entire enclosure, that day, accompanied by Billy, and had decided that no fellow could get out unless he used a ladder.

“He’s about the smartest goat there is,” remarked Rodney, “but I’d better watch him and see how he does it.”

Supper time came and went, everywhere, and after that the evening shadows began to settle down over the city. Then anybody looking in that direction from a distance would have seen a kind of glow in the sky above it, coming up from all the lights that were burning along all the hundreds of streets. There was no moon to speak of but there were lights, in front windows of dwellings and business places, and the stars helped also, so that it seemed a pleasant kind of evening.

Walled In

There was one street, on the eastern side of the city, which projected nearly a hundred feet out into the East River in the form of a wooden pier. Only one solitary street-lamp was burning on the pier and beyond it all was a gloomy glimmer of rippling, rushing water. A swift tide was rushing out and a brisk wind was blowing.

The one lamp was on the left side of the pier, at the head of a flight of wooden steps, leading down to a float, and by the float was moored a small but serviceable steam tug-boat. In that light, all that could be seen of her was a stumpy, sheetiron engine chimney; a lot of small windows, lighted up inside; some steam from a puffing pipe; and the rest of the boat had to be taken for granted. There were puffs and coughs of steam because the boat was at that moment casting loose her hawser and setting out upon a voyage.

She did not go directly across, but in a slanting, southerly course, out of which she

Evening Visitors

was quickly compelled to veer, yet more to starboard, that is, to her right, by a vast blaze of glitter and puff and a warning hoot of a steam whistle which came swiftly up from the southward. The glittering ranges of windows and the two huge, black pipes that towered above them, belonged to one of the largest "Sound Steamers." She was so large, indeed, that when the tug had passed her and steered into her wake, the swell it was rocked in called out an exclamation of:

"O!—Well!—I declare!" from one of two gentlemen who were sitting in the little cabin.

The next words he uttered, as he once more squared himself in the seat he had been so suddenly pitched out of, were:

"What a swell!—But what I was saying about Jim is this:— He isn't so bad a boy——"

"Not bad at all, I think," said the other.

"But then I can't get at him. I've tried again and again——"

"So have I. He's a complete puzzle."

Walled In

"And he isn't sullen, either, and he isn't exactly rebellious, but you can't make any impression on him."

"He says he was unjustly convicted and it works on him worse and worse, all the time. We can't help it, though——"

"Of course we can't, but I'm afraid it'll hurt him, all his life——"

"To be sure it will, but we must do our duty. Some of the boys are turning out splendidly. I've been hearing good news from several of mine."

"So have I, but I don't mean to give up Jim. There's the making of a man in that boy."

"He is doing well in the school."

"He is the best type-setter in the printing office."

"I wish he was out. There are a dozen more that ought never to have been sent there. I don't mean that none of them did wrong, but it hurts some boys, worse than others, to be shut up. They feel a sting——"

Evening Visitors

“Here we are——”

They had talked pretty steadily all the way, but the tug was now at her wharf on Randall's Island, and these were two of the managers of the Society for the Reformation of Juvenile Delinquents. The boys were “in prison and they visited them.” They were men of wealth, education, unusual intelligence. There were others like them who came and worked as they did, and it was curious how strong a hold the youngsters seemed to have upon them. Of course the boys liked their friendly, sympathizing visitors, but probably none of them ever knew, at least while on the Island, what a study and worry they were to such men as these, as well as to the exceedingly capable and faithful officers who were all the while in charge of them. Many learned more after going out into the world and finding that even then these friends of theirs did not let go of them but followed them with help and hope and sympathy.

Walled In

So this great school, with its high, stone walls and its rigid discipline and its likeness to a prison, was after all a splendid token of the love that goes out after even the very bad boys whom some people are willing to give up and to throw away. The other name of that Love is very sacred and beautiful.

Jim was not a bad boy, but he felt like one, that night. He felt bad, all over, and angry, and rebellious, and almost hopeless, for he was all the while thinking of the wall and of how high it was, and of all the great world of life and liberty that lay beyond it.

So far as he could see, there were to be long years of House of Refuge life, during which he was to know little and see nothing at all of that wide, bright world, and the thought was very terrible. He thought a great deal and imagined a great deal, but not among any of his imaginings did there come any idea that he had an interest in another boy, over in New York City,—a boy whose house and garden had been walled in by new

Evening Visitors

streets. Jim knew nothing of Rodney ; nor of his mother ; nor of Billy the goat ; nor of Millie Kirby. He could not have guessed that they were ever to be of any importance to him, over on the Island, listening and waiting for the rap of the drum that was shortly to tell him and all the rest that it was bedtime.

IV

BEHIND BOLTS AND BARS

BEDTIME at the House of Refuge was quite an affair. Wherever there might be a squad of boys, in any part of the buildings or grounds, at the tap of the drum, they were expected to "fall in," like soldiers, and march toward the dormitory. Each detachment was sure to have its own officer, a boy promoted, for good behavior and trustworthiness, to be corporal, sergeant, or lieutenant.

The dormitory itself was a remarkable sleeping place. It contained a separate room for each boy, but the rooms were not arranged like those of a hotel or a dwelling. There was one immense room, with plenty of windows for daylight and plenty of burners for gaslight. All around the sides of this room ran a broad, empty space, or passage-way, and inside of this, up and down the middle,

Behind Bolts and Bars

had been constructed two tiers, one above another, of little bedrooms. Each tier was composed of two rows of rooms, set back to back with their faces toward the outer windows. The face or front of each room was made of slender, upright steel bars, not much more than two inches apart, and each room had a door, made in the same way, shutting with a strong, spring lock. Of course, each room was small and the beds were only wide enough for one boy, but they were very clean and comfortable. There was plenty of light when light was needed; plenty of air, always; and then perfect silence to sleep soundly in was secured by the rule which forbade talking or any kind of skylarking in the dormitory.

Watchmen patrolling around the upper or lower tier of cells, or rooms, could at any time see the entire inside of each, as they walked by. The outer doors of the dormitory closed with strong and intricate locks, of a peculiar pattern. Beyond these were

Walled In

other doors, with watchmen, and beyond all was the open parade-ground inclosure and its high stone wall. Beyond this was the chilling, rushing, impassable tide of the deep and pitiless East River. No boy could hope to get out from one of those sleeping cells and into the city,—into liberty and the world until the appointed time should come for him.

The dormitory was as still as still could be, that night, when Jim lay upon his bed and thought of it all, and he grew bitter at heart with the seeming impossibility of even getting a chance to try whether or not he could climb the outer wall.

“I’m about the best climber on the training ship, when they send us into the rigging,” he said to himself. “I could go up on a rope or anything. If I could have some of the other fellows with me! Some things I guess I couldn’t do alone. I don’t want any but plucky fellows and good climbers. I don’t belong here. I never did it and I’ve been

Behind Bolts and Bars

here long enough. I'm going to get out, if I can.—There, he's just gone by."

That meant the passage of a watchman, on his patrol, and Jim obeyed a strong, angry impulse, to jump out of bed and stare after him through the grated door of his cage.

"It's just like what they put wild animals in, in a menagerie," he thought, fiercely, as his fingers gripped the slim, but strong steel rods.

O!—How he wanted to break out! He drew back, a moment, and then he threw himself, with all his might, against the grating.

He did not care if it hurt him. He was so sore inside that it almost felt good to be pained a little, outside.

Click!

"What was that?—What?—The door is open?—What have I done?—I couldn't have broken it!"

That was so. Every rod in the grating

Walled In

near him and in the door, was perfectly sound and whole, and yet,—he could hardly believe his eyes,—the door of his cage was now standing ajar, as if inviting him to push it open wider and walk out into the roomy corridor. He did so, but it was very much as if it were all a dream.

Jim's first feeling was a strong sense of exhilaration, for one of the barriers he had been thinking of had unexpectedly given way. It was such a strong barrier, too, with its steel gratings and its lock. He turned and stared at his open door and empty bedroom and he came near exclaiming aloud :

“ How did it happen? ”

He knew the door had been shut as carefully as usual by the officer who had been in charge of the boys when they marched into the dormitory.

He examined the lock.

It was a very pretty, very perfect lock, but he saw that its strong, brass tongue, that

Behind Bolts and Bars

played back and forth on its spring when a key worked it, could also be pushed back by his finger, pressing on its end. Then he almost shut the door and could see that the brass tongue was short and would only go under its catch, on the upright at the side, about half an inch or so.

“That’s it!” exclaimed Jim. “I can see, now. When I pushed so hard, I bent the grating, for those light steel bars are springy. They sprung out so far that they pulled out that tongue beyond the catch and so the door slipped open. I can do it again,—Why, —I can get out into the corridor as often as I want to, but I mustn’t let anybody know how it’s done. Not even the other fellows.—I’ll look at their locks.”

It seemed to him as if his very breathing could be heard by somebody, and so he hardly breathed as he stepped softly along to the next door. The gas-jet near him had been turned low and the light was dim, but he could see that the boy in that cell was

Walled In

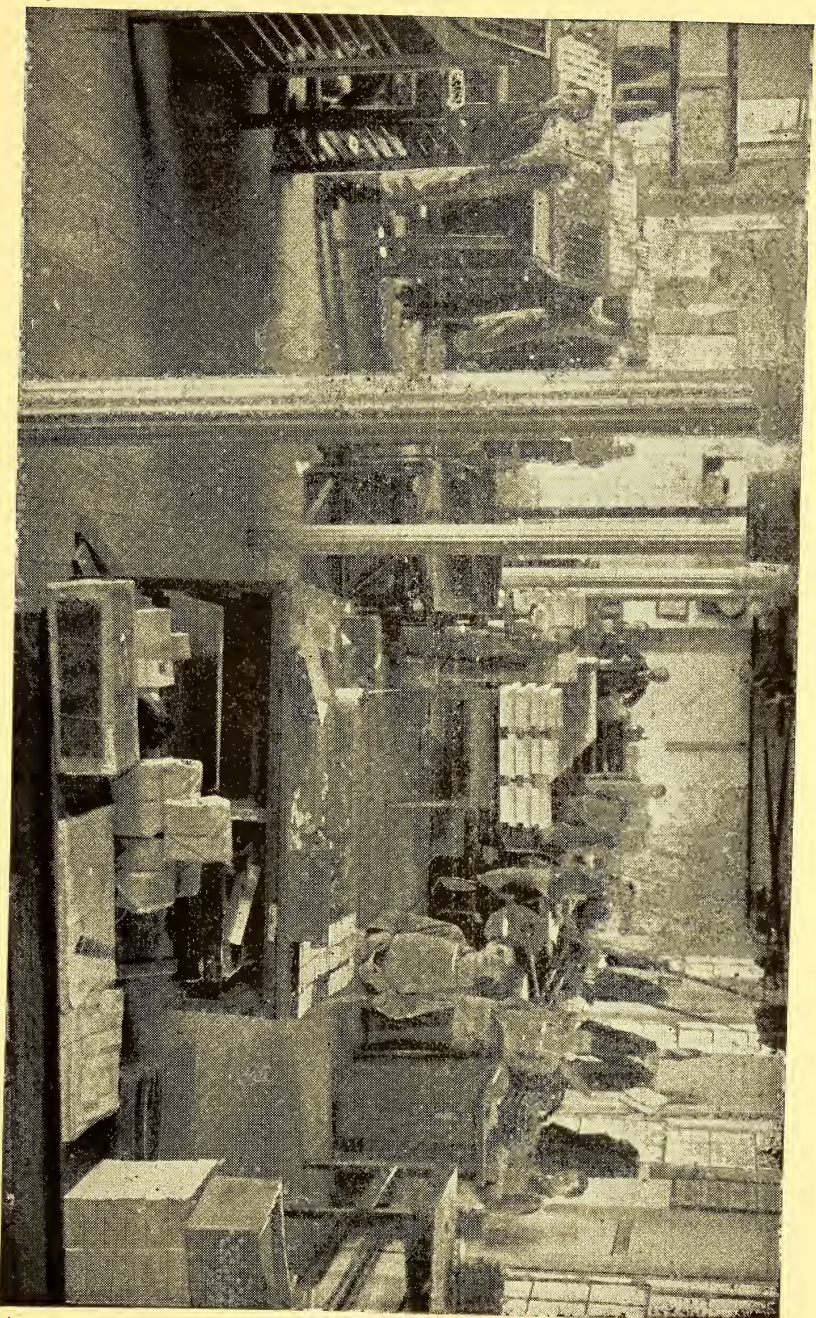
sleeping soundly, after his hard work in one of the shops and his long drill-marching.

“He isn’t one of the fellows I want,” thought Jim. “He can’t climb worth a cent and he hollers when he’s hurt.”

That would never do, for Jim was beginning to feel like a captain, hunting up recruits for some difficult and almost desperate enterprise. Nevertheless, he tried the lock of that boy’s door.

“Yes,” he said to himself, “they are all alike. I can get my finger in over the end of the catch-bolt and push it back.—There, I’ve opened that door, but I’ll shut it again. Guess I’ll go back to bed, too, before anybody comes to catch me. I know I can open the doors, but what good’ll that do? I’ve got to think about it.”

Silently, with his heart beating hard and his breath coming short, Jim slipped back to his own door, and through it, and pulled it shut behind him. He made no noise in doing so,—only a slight click as the bolt



THE SILENT PRINTING OFFICE.

Behind Bolts and Bars

sprang into the hasp,—but he did not feel safe until the bedclothes were over him and he could seem to be asleep. Not many minutes passed before he heard the feet of another watchman, or it may have been the same man,—going along the corridor.

“I’d have been caught,” he thought. “I must look out for that.”

During all those minutes, and long afterward, he lay and thought of locks, locks, locks, on all the doors he knew of in that House of Refuge. He made up his mind to examine them, every chance he could get, and he thought of all sorts of impossible ways of opening them.

It was more and more like a dream until his eyes closed and he was asleep, and he slipped at once into a real dream of having passed all the locked doors, only to find himself standing in front of a stone wall twenty feet high.

Away over in one of the northern wards of the city of New York, Rod Nelson, as

Walled In

sound asleep as Jim, was also dreaming and he too had a stone wall to dream of. He was not trying to climb it himself, however, for he was only looking on while his bearded friend Billy walked up the side of that wall into the avenue, remarking, triumphantly :

“Ba-a-a-beh !”

When morning came, the usual round of activities began, everywhere. The boys in the House of Refuge dormitory dressed themselves in their rooms. Then, as the Superintendent's assistant came and let them out, they all marched away to breakfast. Jim went with the rest, but he gave a keen, inquiring side-glance, at the lock of every door they passed. He thought he saw something worth remembering in the lock of the great, outer door of the dormitory itself.

“He only turned his key in it once,” he said to himself. “I've seen them turn it away around three times. What does that mean? I don't know much about locks. They say these are the best and safest kind, though.”

V

JIM'S PLOT FOR LIBERTY

WOMEN, like Mrs. Nelson, who go out to work for other people, have to get up early, but her first thought, and Rodney's, was more about the door she was to go out by than even about breakfast.

"I'm going right off to find Pat," said Rodney, as he helped her through the upper side-window.

Nevertheless, before setting out on that errand, he went down into the garden and took a long look at all the land which had been walled in. It might be as good as ever, for a garden, but it had a queer, shut-up appearance.

"Where's Billy?" he inquired, aloud. "Hullo. There he is, out on the avenue. How did the old rascal foot it up that wall?"

Walled In

There was Billy, indeed, with his toes on the very edge, and with a wisp of something green sticking out at one side of his mouth.

“Greens!” exclaimed Rodney. “He can steal from a grocer’s wagon better than any other goat I know of.—We used to have a garden. Tell you what, we can make garden of our lots and all the others, too, if we can only have it ploughed. But how would a horse and plough ever get down here?”

It was a pretty deep question and he gave it up, for that time. In a minute more he was upstairs and out through the window, on his errand to Pat. So far as he knew, he left the house without a living soul in it, but before he reached the next corner, the door of the little back bedroom, at the head of the stairs, went to with a sharp slam. It must have been a strong draft of air that did it, or else the door shut itself.

Pat was found and a bargain was made but Rodney did not see the new door. That is, the old door that was to take the place of

Jim's Plot for Liberty

the window. In fact, he felt like being satisfied with almost anything.

When he reached home again, he closed the window carefully behind him and went down and out for another look around at his vacant land. Hardly was he beyond the back doorstep, however, before he was hailed with:

"Rodney!—Do look up there!—Doesn't he look funny! How did he ever manage to get there?"

"Why!—Millie!" exclaimed Rodney.

"Ba-a-a-beh!" came almost piteously down from the upper back window, on the left. It was Rodney's own room and the window had been left open, to air it, and there was Billy.

"I don't care so much how he got in," said Rodney, "but there he is and we must get him out, somehow."

At that very hour, the breakfast room at the House of Refuge was full of hungry boys but it was wonderfully quiet. There

Walled In

was a slight rattle of crockery, and now and then a low-spoken word from one of the officers, but the eyes of those watchful guardians were everywhere and the rules of order were thoroughly enforced. Beyond a doubt, this also was a valuable part of the schooling the boys were getting but it was a kind of restraint and was in danger of being mistaken for oppression. It is one of the traditions of the House that all of the half-way rebellions among the young fellows have broken out in the dining-room or in the schoolroom, where the discipline is so complete, and never in any manner out of doors, no matter how severe might be the drill of the parade-ground.

Jim, at his own table, was willing enough to be silent, then and there, but he was ready to burst with his great secret and was anxious to find somebody, the right boy, to tell it to. He thought them over, one by one, for he knew them all, but it was not easy to decide among them. He was com-

Jim's Plot for Liberty

pelled, at all events, to wait for a proper opportunity, and that could not come for hours, yet. His next experiences must necessarily come to him at his type-setting work, at his "case" in the printing room.

This was a light and pleasant place to be in. It had altogether an air of regular business and not at all of restriction, unless it might be in the clock work precision of whatever was going on and in the fact that there was no talking, no communication, among the many busy "typos."

Jim had a slip of printed "copy" put before him, on his case, and the moment he saw it he remarked to himself:

"Star Spangled Banner?—If I haven't had to set that up four times! I know where that comes from. The Superintendent is always telling us we are Americans. Going to be citizens. So is the Military Instructor. They're both naval officers.—I'm an American, but loads of the other fellows are not. It's my flag.—I'll set it up——"

Walled In

There was something in it. A great deal more teaching than he or any of the others knew was in the flag, the starry flag of freedom, that was carried at the head of the parade-ground battalion ; that was displayed in the larger rooms of the House ; that hung over the principal's platform in the school-room ; and that so finely ornamented the handsome lecture room in the main building. It had something to do with the other teachings and with some of the traditions that passed around among the boys. How some had gone out from that place to be sailors in the navy ; others to be soldiers and even officers in the army ; and how that and everything else, to them and all other boys, depended on good behavior.

Jim was thinking about it, now, but his uppermost thought was that sailors went all over the world, into far off seas, into foreign lands, in freedom ; and that soldiers, especially cavalry soldiers, rode across the plains and among the mountains, seeing and doing

Jim's Plot for Liberty

wonderful things, in freedom. O, how he longed for something wild and dashing and adventurous,—something like the very dash for freedom that he was even now looking forward to and trying to plan!

He naturally supposed that his undertaking, if he should make it, would have to do with the various kinds of persons near him, and would as soon have thought of China, as of a boy and girl who were looking at a goat, in a second story window, over in the city. He was not in their thoughts either, and Millie's next remark was:

"Mother says you can go through our house as much as you want to. She won't lock the back door——"

"I'll come right over and see her, soon as I've got Billy down," said Rodney. "I want to find out how he got into my room."

"I'll wait," said Millie. "Mother said she wanted to see you—" but he had already darted into the house.

In a moment more the door of his bedroom

Walled In

was opened and out sprang Billy. Without stopping to explain how he got in, or in what freak of goat-mind he butted that door shut, he showed Rod that he could at least go downstairs. Rod followed him out and Millie shouted:

“There he goes!—Now you come right along with me!”

She was a short, thin, dark haired girl, with eyes and a face that seemed all one flush and sparkle of go and energy. Her very voice had in it something peremptory and Rod stepped off as obediently as if she had been a school-teacher. He knew the way through the gap in the fence and through the Kirby back-yard, and he knew that they had a hall running through the house to the street door. That opened on an old avenue that was all built up and almost all the lower stories of the houses were used for business purposes. Mr. Kirby was a printer and his ground floor was his shop, with a steam engine in the rear room. There were two

Jim's Plot for Liberty

stories above for the family to live in and the hall went all the way through.

"Thank you ever so much," said Rodney to Mrs. Kirby, when she came downstairs, "but we're going to have a door put in and then we won't have to climb through the window——"

"You can use our hall till then," said Mrs. Kirby, with a voice and manner precisely like Millie's, "but I can't have you bringing any other boys to tramp through. Mr. Kirby's workmen are bad enough——"

Something else called her and she was gone before Rodney could think what to say to her, but she had used one word that fitted closely to all he had been thinking about while he was looking at the walls and the land and the house.

"Workmen?" he said. "Tell you what, Millie, don't I wish I had a trade! I'm afraid I ain't going to get one. They say there isn't any chance for boys, nowadays——"

Walled In

"I can set type," said Millie, "when there's any to set, but father says it's awful dull times. I want to do something else."

"I'm going to!" exclaimed Rodney. "You see if I don't. I won't let my mother work to support me. I'm going to get out, somehow."

So he too had a feeling that he was somehow penned in. Circumstances were against him and he must climb over them or get around them. Billy the goat had somehow or other circumvented the walls created by the streets and avenues. What a goat could do, a boy could do, but then Rodney did not as yet quite understand how Billy had managed to perform his feat.

VI

PLANS FOR ACTION

DIFFERENT people have different kinds of difficulties to overcome. Rodney Nelson, over in the city, felt as if he were shut up from doing anything better than the work of changing his mother's furniture from one room to another. He had no trade; nothing that he could earn money with; no prospects for the future. Jim, setting up type at his case in the printing office of the House of Refuge, felt almost as if he had no hope whatever. He had a new experience before him, however, and it began to come soon after he got out upon the parade-ground. It was not yet time for the afternoon drill and all the boys were at liberty to do as they pleased. Some of them were playing ball; some were at leap-frog; some were simply skylarking, as they called it, and that meant

Walled In

all sorts of rough fun. It was Jim's time for selecting the boys to whom he could tell his secret and get them to join him in whatever he was going to do. He was just going to speak to one boy, when something came into his mind that made him stop.

"No, I guess I won't tell him," he said to himself. "I don't belong here, but he does. I couldn't look the Superintendent in the face if I should let that fellow out. It's the best place for him. He didn't know a thing when he came here. Now he can read and write and make shoes——"

Just then one of the officers passed him, with a nod and a smile, and Jim could smile back, as he touched his hat, for he had less of a sort of guilty feeling which had troubled him. He turned and looked at the great crowd of boys, scattered over the enclosure, and his thought took a wider form.

"Let 'em all out!" he exclaimed. "Why, it would be the worst thing in the world for most of 'em."

Plans for Action

That did not change his idea concerning himself and he may not have been a good judge of what was best for others, for, before the afternoon was over there were four boys besides himself who knew about the dormitory door-locks.

"If yours won't spring open, mine will," he said. "Just you wait, anyhow, till I come and let you out."

They were excited enough about it, but each boy of them seemed to feel, as strongly as he did, that it would be doing the hundreds of others hurt instead of good to let them out of that place.

The Superintendent and the Managers might even have been gratified if they could have known how clear was the opinion expressed that they were "doing first-rate" with the youngsters under their charge.

That was not the only matter that Jim had to study, during that very long day. He believed that he knew every stone in the parade-ground wall, already, and now he

Walled In

found himself studying the buildings also, and wondering how he should ever manage to lead a squad of escaping boys right through them. Getting out of a bedroom was only a kind of beginning, after all, and Jim's heart sank within him, for he thought:

"They are stronger than the wall is, and beyond them is the East River.—I don't care! It's just the awfulest kind of thing to do, but I'm going to do it, somehow!"

No point or place in all the barriers of the House of Refuge seemed to promise a door through which he could get out.

That very evening, over in their house, Rodney and his mother were also discussing the door question, but they were also wondering over the fact that Billy the goat had evidently found one, for that remarkable animal was again missing.

"He can stay outside, too," said Rodney, "if we're going to have a garden."

"He'd eat up everything we planted," remarked Mrs. Nelson. "We've three whole

Plans for Action

lots of our own, and we can garden all the rest till they build on them. That won't be for ever so long."

"It's about all I can do," said Rodney, and he seemed to have a hopeless feeling about it and he went to bed thinking:

"If there's anything that just tires a fellow out, it's having nothing to do."

Jim, on the other hand, marched into the dormitory, with the rest, feeling tired all over because he had something to do and did not yet know how to do it. He lay awake a long time, listening to the faint sounds which now and then disturbed the silence. No kind of rules could prevent some stirring until all the boys were asleep, but one sound that Jim waited for was that of the feet of the watchman, patrolling the corridor. He heard it come and go, more than once, before he cautiously arose and went to his steel-barred gate.

He had been studying that matter and he did not bang himself against it, this time.

Walled In

He folded his coverlet and poked it in among the middle bars, so that it covered three of them. Then he put on his stockings and his shoes, pulled his bedstead nearer, lay down on his back and drove both feet against the padded spot, with all his might. The coverlet had prevented any noise, but he had to try again and again.

"There!" he whispered, at last. "I've done it! The door's open!"

Off came his shoes and in an instant he was out in the corridor, but there he paused, for a strange, guilty feeling came over him. He almost felt as if he were stealing something. He did not quite understand it, but he mustered all his resolution and went on. In less than three minutes he had his four friends, in their stocking feet, out of their cells.

"Come on!" he whispered. "All we can do, to-night, is to find out how."

They only dared to nod at him, in reply, as they followed him to the large door, lead-

Plans for Action

ing out of the dormitory. It was not grated but made solidly, of wood, and it had a stern, forbidding look. Jim leaned forward and felt of the lock.

"There!" he said. "Hush—sh!—They only turned the key once, when they locked it. If they'd turned it twice I couldn't have opened it."

Slowly, heavily, reluctantly, the massive door came open, as he pulled, and he could peep out. O, how his heart was beating! The other boys stood and watched him as if he were a kind of hero, but he suddenly closed the door.

"He's coming!" he whispered. "We've got to wait for some night when the watchman's asleep. Get back to bed!"

There was a swift flitting along the corridor, a careful pulling to of five grated doors, and the patrol who went by them a minute or so later discovered no sign of anything unusual.

Jim lay awake for a while. There was a

Walled In

glow of exultation all over him, for he felt that he had gained one point now. Then he thought of the great world of freedom he hoped to escape into.

"Spring is here," he thought. "Pretty soon things'll be green and growing. I want to go up and see our place, but I won't go in. I want to see Aunt Betty, but I don't want to see Uncle John. He'd say I did wrong to get out. I don't believe she would. There's a farm here and lots o' greenhouses, but only a few boys can work in them. I mean to be out in the country when summer comes."

Between him and the country, however, lay the great city, and between Randall's Island and that ran the deep, swift tides of the East River. It made him shiver to think of that, but he could see, in his mind's eye, not only the river, with the wharves and buildings on the opposite side, but the one little wharf on this side, where the little tug that belonged to the House of Refuge was

Plans for Action

sure to be moored, each night, after all its trips to and fro were ended. He knew she was there, now, a tight little craft, mostly chimney and cabin, and just then he suddenly sat up in bed.

“That’s it!” he said, almost aloud. “I remember! There’s a little lifeboat on top,—on the roof deck. If we could get her! There might be a watchman on the wharf.—There might not.—I guess we could get her into the water. O!”

There seemed to be really less water in the East River, now he had thought of that boat, but he sank back on his pillow and went to sleep while he went over and over the obstacles that lay between him and the wharf where the tug was moored. His boy associates, curiously enough, were long since sleeping soundly, as if they had been contented to leave all the required thinking and all the anxiety to their busy minded and daring young captain.

VII

ONE PLAN THAT FAILED

EARLY hours were the rule of the dormitory, but general conversation could not begin at once on getting up. Jim did not feel like speaking to anybody. His first strong impression was that any officer who looked him in the face might see there that something was going on. His next, as he met his confederates, one by one, was that he could see by their faces that they were trying to keep a secret.

After that, he was little surprised to find himself making the same remark concerning some of the smaller boys. He thought no more about that, for they were very apt to get into scrapes, but they did indeed have something on their minds, every inch as heavy, for them, as was the load he carried himself.

One Plan That Failed

He had already learned over again one thing that he had known before. This was that all his hopes and plans must wait awhile. He would have to go along and let things turn up, one after another. Nobody can ever tell what is coming next or how their plans will unexpectedly run into those of other people.

Mrs. Nelson and Rodney, for instance, could hardly say that they had any plans, beyond hoping to sell one of their town lots for enough to pay the taxes and assessments on the rest; and having a door put in; and having a garden. She could not afford to keep Rodney any longer at school. He was old enough to earn something, and, besides, what if she should get sick or be out of work?

"I've got to do something," he said, as he was carrying a chair upstairs. "Millie Kirby can set type. I wish I could. But she learned how in her father's shop."

She was a stirring kind of girl, anyhow,

Walled In

and he was a little afraid of her, but when he came downstairs again, she was in the back doorway, calling out:

“Rodney! Rodney!—You must come over to our house, right away! Billy’s down in our cellar and we can’t get him out. He’s drank up all the milk and he’s eaten all the vegetables. He tried to butt me and mother, too.”

“How did he get there!” exclaimed Rodney, setting out at once. “The old rascal!”

“The cellar was shut up, all night,” she said, “and the things were put into it to keep them safe, and when we went down, this morning, there was Billy, ready to fight us.”

“He’s the worst old goat!” said Rodney, “and he doesn’t belong to me, anyhow.”

He went in a hurry, however, and in a few minutes he began to understand the matter. The cellar stairs went down from a door opening into the hall.

“That was open when you and I went

One Plan That Failed

through, yesterday," said Rodney to Millie "He just followed us. Why, it's through this hall he gets out into the street, sometimes. He watches till the door's open. I guess he got into my room through that front window."

That was not all, if Rodney had but known the working of the mind of a goat. Having once gone downstairs successfully, in his own house, the next time he saw stairs before him, they seemed to promise to let him out into liberty, and so he was now down in the Kirby cellar, a very much bewildered goat. His plans had all gone wrong and he was glad to have his own best friend take him by the horns and lead him upstairs again.

"There he goes!" shouted Millie, but Rodney was just then listening ruefully to Mrs. Kirby's energetic account of all the robbery and other mischief Billy had accomplished in her cellar.

He was glad enough to get away home-

Walled In

ward and carry an account of Billy's transactions to Pat the carpenter, up on the new avenue.

"The baste!" exclaimed Patrick. "But thim will climb anywhere.—Luk at that? It's a big hole for wan dure but it's the good job I'm makin."

"I can paint it," said Rod. "I guess I can paint all the side of the house. 'Twon't take much, all that's above the street.—Then if I could get the garden ploughed——"

"Why not?" exclaimed Pat. "Sure, I know a man wid a small horse and a plough of his own. If Billy can come through Kirby's hall, why can't a pony? I'll see to that same."

It was a ray of hope for Rod, although he doubted if Mrs. Kirby would let a horse of any kind go through her house. He said he would see her about it, but what he really meant was that he would speak to Millie.

That was a long day to quite a number of people. Nowhere, however, was there more

One Plan That Failed

of it than among some of the boys who spent part of its afternoon in a long, hard drill on the House of Refuge parade-ground.

Most of them marched pretty well, but there were several middle-sized boys, in the third company from the front, who had to be spoken to, several times, for the way they missed step.

Jim was not near enough to them, when the line halted before the wall and faced about, to notice how they craned their heads around and stared at it. What could they have been thinking about, in or on that gray, stony face?

Jim himself had thought of it and had studied it, and it seemed to him to be all the while coming between him and the island wharf. Still, he paid particular attention to his orders and his marching, just as he had, in the earlier part of the day, to his type-setting tasks.

The close of the day came, at last, in a dim, foggy kind of dusk that promised dark-

Walled In

ness much earlier than usual. The parade-ground, and all the rest of the wide enclosure, outside of the buildings, seemed to be deserted. Inside of the buildings, however, there suddenly arose a kind of buzz, that quickly amounted to something like an excitement. A rumor whispered its way around among the boys that three of their number were missing and could not be found.

They did not know that the first difficulty which troubled their officers, just then, was that there was not a sufficient number of themselves for indoor duty and, at the same time, to spare searchers for stray boys over so large a space and in so many places. Nearly a score of the older and more trustworthy boys were therefore picked out as helpers, and they were quickly scurrying hither and thither, in all directions. Jim felt especially gratified that the Assistant Superintendent, a handsome young naval officer whom he could not help liking, chose him for one of the hunters. He knew that

One Plan That Failed

neither of the fellows were missing whom he intended as the crew of his boat, and he went out into the dim, gloomy parade-ground with a perfect fever of curiosity to discover what any other fellows were up to.

"They can't get away," he said to his blue uniformed friend, "but what can they be trying to do?"

"We'll see," said the officer, "but we can't find a trace of them."

It was indeed a pretty long time before they did so. Every nook and cranny of the shops and other buildings and of all the walled-in ground had been gone over and it was fast getting into the shape of a mystery.

Jim was carrying a lantern, but the officer held in his hand a different kind of light, a reflector, a "bull's-eye," that would throw a stream of light ahead like a small locomotive headlight. He was busily throwing it in all directions and just now, as if by mere accident, he sent it up to the roof of the large building next to the engine building. It

Walled In

was not so very high, but was much higher than the latter and it had several chimneys, coming out just above its eaves.

“Hullo!” exclaimed Jim.

“There they are!” said the officer, almost laughing; and then he shouted, commandingly :

“Come down, boys! We’ll put up a ladder.”

They had not gone up there by a ladder, but, with wonderful pluck and agility, by way of the water-pipe at one end of the building. They had then intended to have remained hidden, each behind a chimney, until all should be quiet within the enclosure.

After that they would have had to come down into the parade-ground again and hunt for some means of scaling the wall. As for anything beyond that, when they came down and were questioned, it seemed that all their small plot went no further. They did not know what they meant to do after getting over the wall.

One Plan That Failed

“They might have known they’d be missed, right away,” thought Jim. “Glad they didn’t fall and break their necks. Best thing for ’em that they got caught. But I’ve learned one thing. That high building has water pipes on this side but the engine building hasn’t any. It’s a low building, too. I wish there was some way for getting on the roof of it and down the other side, but there isn’t any.”

So there his own plan broke down again, just as had the thoughtless undertaking of smaller boys. Nevertheless, an hour or so after they were all safely locked up in the dormitory, he was out of his own cell and in four others, one after another, telling his friends he believed he had discovered a pathway which might lead them all to the wharf on the bank of the river.

VIII

NEW IDEAS THAT CAME

IT is not always pleasant to have to wait, but there are a great many things to be learned, sometimes, while one is waiting.

Jim was now studying the House of Refuge, all over, all the while, and at first even the officers seemed like a part of the barrier he would have to break through in order to get out. Then, as he thought of them, he found himself wishing he could tell them he was not intending to run away from them, not at all, but only from the idea of being shut up. He longed for freedom. The House had been a sort of home, for a long time, but he wanted to escape from its unchanging routine of work and school and drill, and firm, though kindly discipline. No such thing was known there as corporal punishment, but all the rules were rigidly en-

New Ideas That Came

forced, and Jim wanted to get away from them. Most of all, however, he wanted to escape from the sting and shame of being in prison, and from the injustice of being there for something he did not do. More than once he half wished he could explain himself to one of the Managers, a gentleman who used to come and sit down with the boys and talk with them. They told that man everything, somehow, as if he were an older brother.

Not only Jim but his confederates grew a little feverish, as the days went by. They even ran risks of discovery, for night after night they were out in the corridor, minutes at a time, trying the lock of the great door and peering furtively into the passage-way beyond to see what the watchman was doing. Jim knew more, now, about the tug and the wharf, and he had had opportunities for examining both sides of the engine house.

"It's too high to climb," he said, "unless we can get something to climb with. They

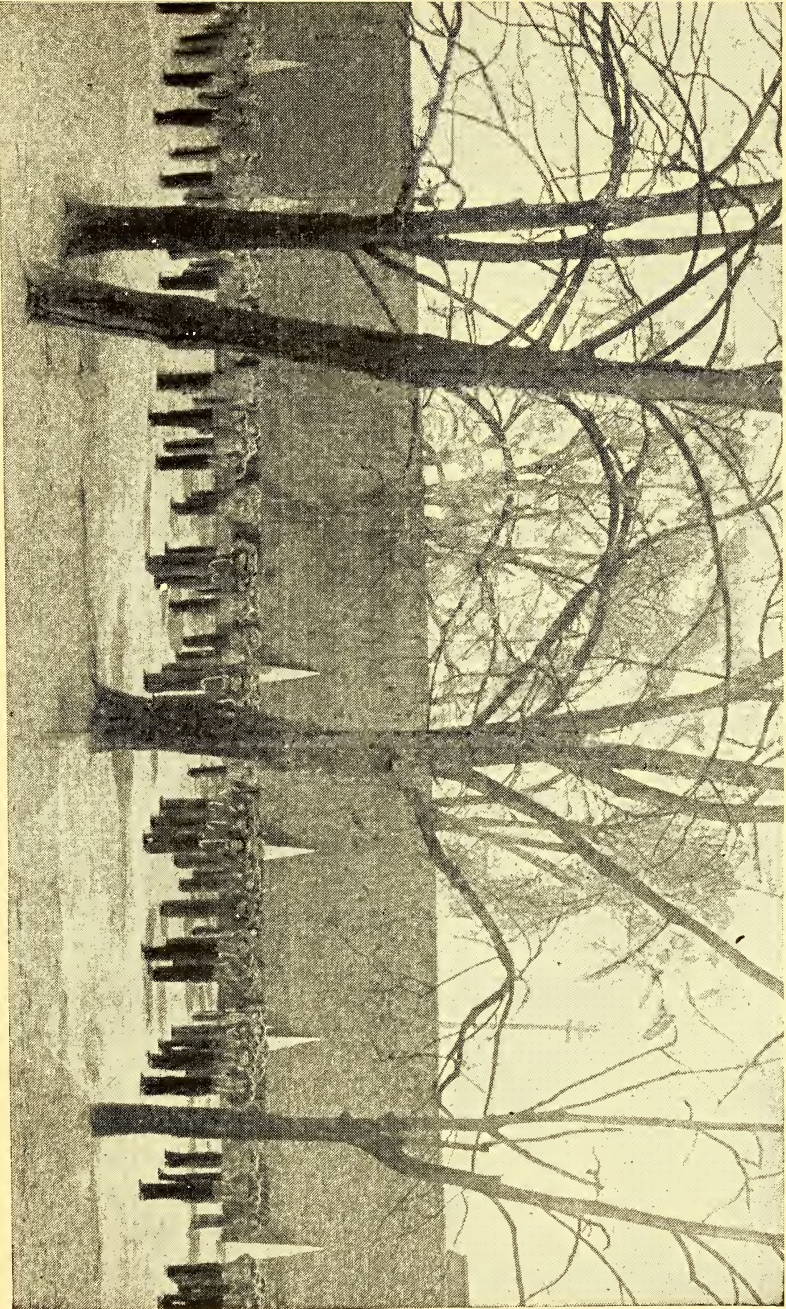
Walled In

never leave out a ladder, anywhere. It's nothing but walls, walls, walls!"

He could not solve that problem, yet, but one of Rodney Nelson's had been solved for him. Mrs. Kirby had permitted Pat's friend to take his pony and plow through her hall, and the garden had been thoroughly ploughed and harrowed. Rodney was having plenty of work, therefore, although he would rather have been learning a trade. Most of the ground was to be planted in potatoes, but Millie Kirby told Rodney that if it were hers she would make every inch of it grow something.

She was over there, at the house, one evening, just after supper and they were all out on the sidewalk, looking at the new door. Billy the goat was standing with his forefeet on the edge of the wall, near them, looking down as if he were anxious to see his new vegetables begin to come up in that garden.

"Mrs. Nelson," came from behind them, "I want to spake to ye about another job."



THEY ALL STOOD STILL WHILE THE DRUM BEAT.

New Ideas That Came

"Pat," she said, "but what a big door!"

"Isn't it fine, ma'am?" replied Pat. "Now he's painted it green, with red siding, and all the rest of the hoose white. It's the good painter he is, for a b'ye——"

"But the door's big enough for the biggest kind of house——" began Millie.

"That's it," said Pat. "It kem out of an owld grocery-sthore front. It's a sthore dure and not a hoose dure at all. What yez want, Mrs. Nelson, is to put a sthore behind that dure. The front room there is for that. Sure, the big, bay windy is there to show things in. Ye could sell all that comes from the garden, and hooks and eyes, and tay and coffee and sugar, and mebbe onything."

"That's it, mother," shouted Rodney, but Pat had more to say and he went on:

"What yez want, now, is a counter and some shelvin', and a whole lot of thim was thrown away from a place I know of, yisther-day. It'll all go in, there, aisy, and the b'ye could paint it——"

Walled In

“Fetch it right along,” said Rodney, and his mother repeated it.

“Fetch it along,” she said. “Why, we could keep a thread-needle store, and no rent to pay.”

“I’ll come and ’tend counter, too,” said Millie: “while you’re out and Rodney’s at work in the garden. Besides, he could carry newspapers——”

“I must go, now,” interrupted Pat, “but I’ll do that, at wanst, and by-and-bye yez can take out the middle partition, and have the whole flure in wan, and there’s your big sthore.”

He was off, leaving them to consider the matter, but the next remark was from Billy and it had a doubtful sound.

“Ba-a-ah-eh-beh!” he remarked.

The making of the new avenue and the laying of its neat, stone sidewalk, went rapidly on. It was already a thoroughfare, with wagons and foot passengers using it all the while. Only a few days later, Pat and Rod-

New Ideas That Came

ney spent an evening putting in the shelves and the counters. They would look shabby enough until they were painted, but there was a kind of promise in them.

“It’s the fine sthore ye’ll have,” said Pat, “and no trouble with ony landlord. Many’s the sthore’d do well, if it wasn’t for havin’ rint to pay.”

“It’ll be long before it pays us anything, I’m afraid,” said Mrs. Nelson. “We mustn’t wait till Rodney can gather potatoes from that garden, though. I must see about getting something else.”

“I’m going to do that, myself,” remarked Rodney.

The bright, spring days were doing all they could for the gardens in the city and everywhere else, and there came one very bright day to Randall’s Island. The very water of the East River, on either side of the island, seemed to dance in the sunlight, and the mad rush of the tide through Little Hellgate channel, between that and Ward’s

Walled In

Island, northerly, was all one glitter. The great city of New York, over on Manhattan Island, was looking its very best, but the boys in the House of Refuge parade-ground could not see it. They could see nothing outside of their stone walled enclosure, but one boy saw something inside of it, just after the battalion broke ranks, which made him stand still and almost turn pale. The drums had ceased their beating, but his heart took up the business and went on, beating hard, for a full minute. He looked, he looked again, he stared earnestly at the roof of the engine house, and he exclaimed, aloud:

“That’s it!—That’ll do!”

Then he stooped and picked up a clutter of rope that lay upon the ground and threw it into a large, empty box, like a dry goods case, which stood near the corner of the base ball ground.

“I guess they won’t take it in,” he said, “and if they don’t, it’ll be there. I won’t say anything to the boys, yet.”

New Ideas That Came

Precisely what he meant, he did not explain, but there was a flush on his face and a bright light in his eyes, all supper time.

Everything went on as usual, and in due season the long column of gray uniformed youngsters, larger and smaller, tramped into the dormitory and they were toled off to their sleeping cages. Not one was missing, for those who were still detained outside, on various duties, were all considered accounted for.

Jim was not one of these, and all he seemed to have to do was to get into bed and go to sleep. He got into his bed, indeed, in the most orderly way, but he did not go to sleep. No boy could do more than shut his eyes, by main force, when all the rest of him was in such a tingle.

Jim had a curious sensation of feeling very brave, himself, but of not being exactly sure of the pluck and steadiness of his comrades that were to be. His next idea was that he had enough and to spare for the

Walled In

whole party and that he could and would see them through.

He was their captain and the whole responsibility of success or failure rested upon him. It grew heavier, too, during three long hours that he deemed it well to wait, before he arranged his bed-battering ram and began to try his heels upon the springing steel rods of his grating.

The door seemed to open harder than usual, and he was afraid he was making a noise that would be heard by the wrong persons, but at that moment the lock-bolt clicked.

"It's open!" he said to himself. "Now for the big door, before I stir 'em up. I must see how things are."

O, how carefully he fingered the lock of that strong, wooden portal!

"They only turned it once!" he said. "It's a slipping!"

It slipped silently back and he turned the knob and pulled. Then, as he peered fur-

New Ideas That Came

tively out, he drew a very long breath and wheeled around and darted along the corridor.

He opened one of the doors, but just behind it stood a boy, fully dressed, with a pair of shoes in one hand.

"How is it, Jim?"

"Murphy's asleep! Come!"

Another door was visited and another boy stepped forth to hear the same news, with the order:

"Follow Joe! Wait at the door."

Two more cages let out their actually trembling boys, and now all five of them stood in line at the main doorway.

Jim looked out and turned and raised his hand. In a moment more, that door was shut behind them and four of them had made their silent, stocking-footed way, to another, similar barrier, at the end of the hall. Their captain was leaning over the slumbering watchman, for in his relaxed hand, almost let go of, was a bunch of keys, and to take

Walled In

them away without waking him was a delicate piece of work. It was more than that, for Jim felt that it was something very like stealing. He would not have had one of the Managers see him do it for the world. He felt mean, even after he got the keys, but he seemed to get over it while he was opening the outer door with one of them. Then the hardest thing to do was to carry back the whole bunch and put it silently down by the watchman, so that he need not miss them.

Jim did it, and he felt less like a thief after giving back those keys, but in a half minute more he and his friends were out on the parade-ground, clustering close to the shadowy wall of the engine house. They had accomplished a great deal, but they had not yet escaped, by any means.

IX

GETTING OVER THE WALL

THERE were lights, here and there, in some of the windows of the House of Refuge buildings and there were others, like street-lamps, outside, but all was silence.

The boys themselves had hardly dared to whisper, but now one of them asked :

“ Jim, how are we to climb the wall ? ”

“ We won’t climb it,” said Jim. “ See ! right here ! Three empty boxes and a board ! We are going over the roof.”

“ But we can’t get down on the other side,” whispered another boy.

“ Yes, we can,” replied Jim triumphantly, as he held up a coil of small rope that he pulled out of a box. “ Wait and see. Let’s pile up these things.”

It was easy work for five strong, active boys, to put those boxes one on top of an-

Walled In

other, but even then the board only reached from the topmost box to a little above the eaves of the building.

“Now, boys,” said Jim, “soon as I’m up, throw me the end of the rope.”

Not many young fellows could have gone up that board as he did, or, afterward, up the steep, slippery slates of the roof, with a coil of rope in one hand. It was first-rate gymnastics, with a chance for a slide and a heavy fall, but Jim reached the ridge, just as one of his followers came up over the eaves, after making several small failures to climb the board.

“Now for the rope,” said Jim, as he passed it around a chimney that came up through the ridge, tied it at the ends and threw the loop down toward the head of the board. He could hold it steady and it was all they needed. Very quickly, all five were perched in a row, like blackbirds on a fence.

“What’s next?” they asked.

“Glad we all had so much practice on the

Getting Over the Wall

training ship," replied Jim. "It takes a sailor to go down by a rope. This one's long enough to hang down, double, almost to the ground. It won't be much of a drop, then. I'll go first. Hold hard! Steady, now!"

Even yet, he had not told them the whole of his plan, but they were learning to trust him and they were eager enough to do just as he said.

On the whole, they had at least learned soldierly obedience and good discipline in the school they were escaping from.

Down went Jim, hand over hand, to the eaves on the outer side of the engine house, and then he disappeared. They had hardly been able to see him, anyhow, and now they waited, half shivering, till a warning tug at the rope told them he had safely reached the ground. He had really found little difficulty in doing that and the hardest share really fell upon the last boy of all, for it seemed to him as if the other four had taken all night for it.

Walled In

"Wait, now," said Jim, as he untied the ends of the rope.

"Leave it," said one of the boys. "We don't want it any more."

"I'll show you," said Jim, as he drew down the full length of the untied rope, coiled it and made a hank of it. "If they find it on the other side, they won't know how we got down."

He threw it with all his might; it cleared the roof-ridge and down it slid into the parade-ground to keep its own secret.

"What are we going to do, now, Jim?"

"Come on!" he said. "Follow me!—The lifeboat on the tug!"

"I just want to yell!" exclaimed the boy he had called Joe. "We're going to beat 'em, this time."

"Glad it's so dark," said Jim. "Don't you make a sound! Step carefully!"

Like so many young panthers, prowling in the woods, they went forward, a step at a time, single file, until they had cleared the

Getting Over the Wall

corner of the main building and were in the broad, well kept grounds between that and the East River. Jim himself wanted to shout when he saw the water and, far beyond it, the glimmering midnight lamps of the city.

There, only a short distance from them, now, was the wharf at which the tug was moored and over the wooden-railed walk leading down to it was a bright gaslight burning.

"Down!" said Jim. "We must creep, now. Not on all fours.—Creep!"

So they did, and a watchman who was patrolling the entire front of the House did not catch a glimpse of them. Head foremost, they followed their leader, down the wooden-railed companion way to the wharf.

"There might have been a man on guard here," said Jim, "but there isn't."

There was a light in the cabin of the tug and another in the engine room, but no living being was to be seen as they scurried up

Walled In

the bit of ladder that took them to the upper deck, the roof, of the tug, where the lifeboat lay.

“Quick, boys!” said Jim. “Over with her! There isn’t a minute to spare!—Don’t you see? There’s a stir in the House! We are missed, already!”

The lifeboat’s fastenings were good, but they were arranged for her easy launching. She was loose in a moment. Then there was a shove, a grating sound, a splash in the water,—but Jim’s exulting:

“Now, boys! Down we go! She’ll float. All we’ve got to do is to bail her out—” was followed by a loud shout from the front door of the main building and through all its corridors there were hurrying feet and rapidly given orders, for the officers had found five sleeping cells wide open and not a boy in one of them.

About the last place in the world where anyone would look for a missing boy, at about two o’clock in the morning, would be

Getting Over the Wall

in a lifeboat on the outer side of a steam tug in the East River.

The startled officers of the House of Refuge were not at first thinking of the river, but of things inside of their high, strong walls, which no boy could climb over or get through.

Jim and his friends in the little lifeboat were baling her out rapidly. Of course, it had filled on plunging in, but very quickly enough was out for another boy to clamber down and help without sinking her gunwale under. Then they all came down, and they seemed to be one shiver of mingled fear, excitement and exultation. In a minute more, the oars were out, and, just as two or three men with lanterns came hurrying down toward the wharf, Jim exclaimed, under his breath:

“Pull, boys!—I’ll steer out into the dark. We’ll go with the tide. They’ll come after us with the tug. It’s going to be a race!”

Four boys at the oars and one to steer

Walled In

made a fair crew for so small a boat. She was swift, too, and so was the tide that swept her onward, but her pursuers knew, now, that she was gone and steam was already up on the tug. Only a minute or so more was wasted by them in waiting for the engineer, and another minute in casting loose, but every second of those minutes was made the most of by the runaways.

“There goes her whistle!” exclaimed one of the rowers. “She’s after us——”

“She can go faster than we can.”

“We’ve a good start.”

“No talking, boys,” said Jim. “Our chance is good, yet,—Hullo!”

Not far ahead of him, as he sat in the stern of the boat, he could see the lights on a great Sound steamer, as she came puffing along against the tide, but it struck him that she had made her appearance, suddenly, as if she had been hidden.

“Hurrah!” he shouted. “That saves us!”

Getting Over the Wall

"What is it, Jim?"

"Anything happened to the tug?"

"What's coming?"

"Coming?" said Jim. "Why, we are pulling right into the thickest fog you ever saw. It'll cover us up so they can't follow us. It isn't the tug I'm afraid of, now."

"What then, Jim?"

"It's the telegraph!" said Jim. "Our getting out'll be known at every police station in the city, inside of five minutes. We must get ashore as quick as we can."

"It's an awful swift tide," said Joe. "Why don't you run right ashore?"

"You can't tell where you're going, in this fog," said Jim, anxiously, for it seemed to him that they had gone more than far enough to have crossed the East River at that narrow place, even in a slanting direction. So they had, and all the while they had heard the steam whistles of all sorts of steamers answering each other through the fog. On, on, they went, the four rowers pull-

Walled In

ing desperately, until Jim asked, hoarsely, as he looked at something just beyond them:

“Boys!—What’s this?—I don’t know much about New York——”

He was from the country, but three of them were city boys and it was one of these who now responded:

“Hush, Jim! If you haven’t steered right into the Harlem River! That’s the Third Avenue swing-bridge. Go right under it. ’Twasn’t far to come, either.”

Right over their heads, now, for a moment, was the vast shadow of the bridge, and then, as they shot swiftly out beyond it, Joe whispered:

“North shore, Jim. We can get right in among the lumber yards. Best kind of hiding place.—We’re safe!”

It was but a minute, after that, before all five of them were standing on a wharf, looking back at the lifeboat, as she disappeared in the fog, for Jim had shoved her off and the tide had caught her.

Getting Over the Wall

“I don’t care where it carries her,” he said. “When they find her, she can’t tell them where she left us.”

X

A NEW HOUSE OF REFUGE

JIM had a very clear idea that the city of New York, with its thousands of sharp-eyed policemen, was no place for him. His four friends, however, were better acquainted with it and they now proposed to work their way down town before daylight, to hiding places they said they knew of. They urged him to come with them but he responded :

“ Too many of us together, all in House of Refuge grey jackets. We’d better scatter. I’m for the country ! ”

Then it was “ Good-bye, Jim ! ” all around, and “ O ! If you haven’t done it ! ” — “ You’re the best kind of fellow ! ” — “ Hope we’ll see you again, some day. ”

“ Not in the House of Refuge, ” said Jim. “ I won’t let them catch me. Now you’re

A New House of Refuge

out, keep out, but I tell you what, boys, we haven't anything to say against any of those officers."

So they all said, and they were off, working their stealthy way along among the huge piles of lumber. How the rest got out of the lumber yard, Jim never knew, but he found a gap in its high, picket fence, squeezed through it, and found himself in an open street. It was pretty well lighted, except for the fog, and Jim saw something, at once, that made him shiver, a little.

"Just what I was afraid of!" he said. "I must wait till he moves on. He might pick me up, any way, for being here at this time o' night."

He did not know that the policeman he saw, standing under the lamp at the street corner, was already warned and was on the lookout for five boys who had escaped from Randall's Island. He was a real danger, therefore, and Jim did well to wait patiently until the officer marched away into the mist.

Walled In

Jim went forward, then, and his main idea was to get as far away as possible from the water-front.

"Hullo!" he exclaimed at the end of many minutes of brisk walking. "What's this?"

Before him seemed to be a vast hollow, and the street he was on ran right across it, without any buildings on either side.

"New street," he said. "It's the new part of the city.—There!—That's the rap of a policeman's club on the sidewalk. My only chance is to hide!"

Down he went, over the wall-like side of that new street, clinging with toes and fingers to rough projections. In a moment more he was at the bottom, crouching close and looking up while a man in a blue uniform strolled slowly along the sidewalk.

"It isn't as high as the wall around the parade-ground," thought Jim. "That's too smooth to climb.—I hope the other fellows'll get away, now they're out. It wasn't just right for me to let 'em out, but I couldn't

A New House of Refuge

help it. It'd be awful if all the boys in the House got away! I don't belong there, though. But what can I do? Where on earth can I go?—Anyhow, I must keep hid till daylight."

It was cold, it was foggy, and his heart sank within him as he crept slowly along the base of the wall, on a kind of exploring expedition. It was dreary waiting, but the time did wear away and the fog cleared when the sun rose.

People were arising, also, and Rodney Nelson was among those who were up and dressed very early. He had business on his hands, now, and he stepped right out of his own room and across the entry, into what he was beginning to call "the store." It did indeed contain a great deal of counter and some shelving, but nothing as yet, that looked like a stock of goods.

"We'll have some, I guess," said Rodney. "I'll go out and take a look at the garden. Nothing has sprouted yet, but lettuce and

Walled In

radishes, but it's going to be the bulliest kind of garden."

Downstairs he went, and his mother was busy around the stove when he passed through the kitchen. Somebody seemed to be calling him, around the corner of the house. He heard a loud:

"Ba a-a-beh?" like a question.

"Guess he'd like some breakfast," said Rodney, as he stepped forward.

There was Billy, looking down from the edge of the sidewalk, but it was not the goat that gave Rodney such a start of surprise. Right before him stood a boy of about his own age and size, dressed from head to foot in dark, grey cloth. He seemed a healthy enough boy, but just now his face was very pale. He had been standing, for Rodney had seen him, close to the wall, where the house came against it, as if he were hiding. On the sidewalk above, and less than a hundred yards away, a policeman was walking leisurely along toward the Nelson place.

A New House of Refuge

“Hullo!” said Rodney. “Who are you? What are you down here for?”

It was all right to question him, but the stranger’s face flushed suddenly and he breathed a long, choking kind of breath, before he exclaimed:

“I say, were you ever in prison?” His voice had a husky, despairing tone.

“No, I never was!” replied Rodney, with strong emphasis. “Was you?”

“Yes, I was,” came promptly back. “My name’s Jim Harris, and I didn’t do a thing. Didn’t steal a cent. But I’ve been in the House of Refuge for a good deal more’n a year——”

“And you got out?” shouted Rodney, enthusiastically. “Hurrah!”

“I got out last night,” said Jim, “and they’re after me, now——”

“Rodney!” exclaimed an excited voice behind him. “Don’t you let them get him! I saw him, from our house, and I came over to tell you. If you do let them get him!”

Walled In

"Of course I won't, Millie," said Rodney, "but he must come right into the house. They'd know him, right away, by his rig."

Millie was thinking with all her might, and her eyes were dancing their liveliest.

"Rod!" she said. "Take him in! Get him something to eat. I'll go and get some of Tom's old clothes. Mother'd let him have 'em all, before she'd see him sent to prison again. O, dear me! It was awful! And he didn't do anything to be sent there for, either."

"I guess it was awful——" said Rodney, but she interrupted him:

"I'll be back as quick as I can. Besides, I want to know how he got out. He must be real hungry——" and away she went.

"Come on, Jim," said Rodney. "You'll be safe, in our house. I'm glad you didn't do it, though. Tell you what, if it had been me, I'd ha' broke loose. How'd you ever manage to do it? Tell us——"

"I will," said Jim, as he followed his new

A New House of Refuge

friend, but a sudden change had come over him.

His step was light and springy, and his face was bright with new hope. He had watched there in the raw, chilly morning until he had grown almost desperate. Not that he had wished himself back in the House of Refuge, but that he had felt very tired, very hungry, and altogether uncertain what to do next, or where to go.

"Mother!" shouted Rodney, with a sort of effort not to shout quite so loud:

"He's from Randall's Island! He got away last night, and the cops are after him. Millie's going to bring him some of Tom's clothes——"

"Rodney!" she exclaimed. "Why, how did he get here?—Now, you keep still and let him tell me all about it."

That was precisely what Rod was very willing to do, and Jim was glad enough to tell them everything.

"O, Rod!" said his mother. "What if it

Walled In

had been you!—His uncle ought to be put there, himself,—and what could his aunt have been thinking of——”

“’Twasn’t her fault,” said Jim, “and the money was really gone. Somebody took it, but I didn’t, and Uncle John may not have been so much to blame. He never liked me anyhow——”

“He ought not to have sent you to jail,” said Mrs. Nelson, positively. “And I suppose they treated you awfully. Did they flog you much?”

“No, they didn’t,” said Jim. “They never flog anybody. It’s the best place in the world for loads of those boys. They get a chance to learn something and they have to behave themselves. What I mean is that I didn’t do anything to go there for, and I didn’t belong there. They’re the best kind of men for the boys that ought to be there.”

He really came up with a good deal of energy to the defence of the House of Refuge and its management, but he was tremendously

A New House of Refuge

in earnest in his assertion that he would not go back there again. He had hardly completed his wonderful story of escape, before the door of the kitchen opened, half stealthily, and they heard the voice of Mrs. Kirby:

“Go right in, Millie. Don’t say a word. Don’t speak about him. Somebody else might be there and hear you. Don’t you run any risk of anybody’s knowing what they’re for. If they don’t fit him, I can alter them _____”

“Come right in, Mrs. Kirby,” called out Mrs. Nelson, but Millie was in first, with her arms full of coats, trousers and other matters, that had nothing grey about them.

“That’s the checker!” shouted Rod. “That old blue. It’s patched, some, but it’ll do first-rate. He won’t look like the same fellow. Come on, Jim. Come into the front room and put ’em on. Mother, you tell ’em just how it was.—Guess the cops won’t get him out of our house.”

There was plainly no danger that any-

Walled In

body now in it would help them, and Jim's possible peril from anybody else was certainly very much less when, a few minutes later, he came back into the kitchen. Mrs. Nelson had, meantime, been telling his story, as he told it, with sympathetic additions of her own.

"It fits him!" shouted Millie, but her mother exclaimed:

"Rodney! What did you put on him that old red necktie for?"

"Guess there isn't anything like it on Randall's Island," said Rodney. "All he's got to do, now, is to keep still till they stop hunting for him."

"They're hunting, everywhere, just now," remarked Jim. "I wish I knew what had become of those other fellows."

"Just you come and eat your breakfast," said Mrs. Nelson. "Don't mind them——"

"We must go home," said Millie, "and I can't come right back. I've a lot of type-setting to do——"

A New House of Refuge

“I can set type,” said Jim. “I was in the printing office, all the while.”

“That’s it!” exclaimed Mrs. Kirby. “Come right over, after breakfast. The last place they’d look into would be Mr. Kirby’s office. You can earn something, too.”

XI

JIM'S HIDING PLACE

JIM enjoyed his breakfast, exceedingly. It was the first he had eaten, for a long time, without any rules against talking. It seemed as if everybody in the room talked all the while. After it was over, he and Rodney went to the door and looked out.

The wide, bare space, in which the Nelson garden was beginning to grow, was not much like the House of Refuge parade-ground, although it seemed to have pretty high, stone walls on three of its sides and a row of buildings on the other. These were different buildings and nearly in the middle of the row was the Kirby place, instead of the Randall's Island printing office. It looked very much as if all this had been getting ready to take Jim in, whenever he should

Jim's Hiding Place

get away from the Island. He had a strong, oppressive feeling, however, that he had not yet entirely escaped.

"They'll think it was awful wrong for me to get away," he thought. "It's just as if it was as bad as stealing to have ever been sent there. How shall I get rid of it?"

He had all the while, month after month, been suffering under a sense of terrible injustice, and now it stung him again, for it was following him, and so, he knew, were men who deemed it their duty to catch him and take him back.

Rodney, too, was thinking of that.

"Jim," he said, "Kirby's printing office is better than working in our garden. They might see you, from the sidewalk, and ask where you came from."

"I guess I could tell 'em, with these clothes on," laughed Jim, for his spirits were improving and it seemed to him as if Randall's Island were drifting away.

At that very moment, in the Bronson

Walled In

farmhouse, away up the Hudson, they were talking about Jim.

A man had come in, just at breakfast time, and had said something which made everybody jump.

"What's that, Squire? Did you say it was a telegraphic despatch from Randall's Island that Jim's got out?"

"Thank God if he had!" exclaimed Aunt Betty, and it looked as if she would have clapped her hands, or danced, if she had not been so anxious to hear.

"Jim and four more of 'em," said the Squire. "It doesn't tell how they did it, but they might come right here, or he might, and you'd ought to know."

"I'd like to know all about it," said Uncle John Bronson, slowly. "If you hear anything more, let me know. Jim may not come this way."

"Perhaps not," said the Squire, "but I just want to say one thing. We're old neighbors, and Jim's a right likely young fellow.

Jim's Hiding Place

I can't guess how he beat 'em, but if he should get up this way, and you or his aunt knew where he was, you needn't say too much to me. You see, it would be my duty to catch him, and I'd have to do my duty _____”

“O, no! Never!” broke in Aunt Betty. “I wouldn't say a word! I wouldn't be so mean as to put that on you. John wouldn't either.”

“Why, Squire,” said Uncle John, “I don't know a word about it——”

“No more do I,” said the Squire, turning to go out. “Good morning.—But he's a plucky young fellow, now, I tell you. How they did it, I don't see.—I'd have to take him. Of course I would. I'd do my duty.—But I don't really believe they need Jim Harris, much, on Randall's Island.”

So different people, in places widely apart, were aware of Jim's escape and were taking their own peculiar view of the matter. Quite a number were wishing they knew

Walled In

how he did it but they had not yet found out.

A sea tide ebbs with as much force and swiftness as it flowed in with, and it will carry loads both ways. This was the reason why when the House of Refuge lifeboat was found, some hours after it was shoved off by Jim and his crew, it was found knocking against the side of a pier away down, near the middle of the city. Therefore it gave no hint as to where it had landed the run-aways. Only an hour or so later, however, the police knew a little more, for they managed to capture poor Joe. He had been altogether too confident and had walked out into the street too soon, without changing his grey uniform for every day clothes. He was a little chopfallen, at first, but he really could not tell much about the other boys. He was at once ferried over to the Island and brought face to face with his old friends, the officers.

“What did you run away for, Joe?” asked the pleasant faced Superintendent.

Jim's Hiding Place

"I—I don't know, sir," replied Joe.

"Didn't we treat you well?" asked the Military Instructor, for Joe had been a lieutenant in one of the companies.

"Of course you did," said Joe. "But, tell you what, I'd as lief come back, but then, any fellow'd get away, if he had Jim to show him how."

"Big adventure!" exclaimed another officer.

That was indeed a part of it, and there was no reason, now, why Joe should conceal anything. He went with them to the dormitory and explained about the locks. Then they walked out into the parade-ground, where the empty boxes still lay at the machine shop wall.

"We went over the roof," said Joe, and every man who heard him tell how they did it agreed with the Superintendent.

"Jim is a genius!" he exclaimed. "Not one boy in a thousand could have planned and carried out that escape."

Walled In

“He’s a captain!” added the skipper of the steam tug. “But we’d have caught ’em, if it hadn’t been for that fog.”

“We shall get them all, before long,” said Jim’s friend, the naval officer. “All but Jim. I’m afraid we’ve lost him. I’m sorry. I did want to do something more for that boy.”

The very kindly man in charge of the House of Refuge printing office also remarked that it was a pity Jim should run away, just when he was learning his trade so fast and so well. He could hardly have guessed that Jim was already at a case in another shop, setting type as busily as usual.

Mr. Kirby himself, a grey-haired, silent man, with a queer kind of smile on his face, was working at the press in another room, but Jim was not the only type-setter. At the next case stood Millie, and between them and the door were other ranges of cases, and two of these were journeymen printers. All were seemingly absorbed in their type-stick-

Jim's Hiding Place

ing when a man in a blue uniform opened the street door and strolled in.

"Where's Kirby?" he asked.

"In the press room," said Millie, but her hand slipped, as she spoke, and all the type in her half filled "stick" went rattling down on the floor.

"That's all pi," laughed the policeman as he strode on to the press room door.

"Kirby," he said, "did you hear about the escape of those young fellows, last night, from the House of Refuge?"

"Got out, did they?" asked Mr. Kirby. "I guess it isn't in the papers."

"Too soon," said the officer. "I don't believe they want it printed, either. It's no fault of theirs, but they want to catch the boys. Smartest escape——" and then he went on with an account of it which contained as many blunders as Jim was just then making in his type-setting. At the end of it, however, the officer said:

"You see, two of 'em are printers, and

Walled In

one's a pretty good one. They're likely to look for work in their own trade, soon as they can get off their prison rig. If they should come to you, now——”

“A boy'd be just hidden away in one of the big printing houses, down town,” said Mr. Kirby. “You couldn't find him.”

“Yes, we could,” said the officer. “Every man and boy in each one of them is already registered by the place itself and by the trades unions. We could find out just where he came from.”

“Then why don't you register my office?” asked Mr. Kirby. “You can take down the name of every fellow here, this morning, so that if any new fellow should come you could mark him. Register me.”

“I don't need to,” said the officer. “Nor your daughter, nor the hands. I'll remember all of 'em, well enough. If I see a new boy here, any time, I can ask about him.”

“Of course,” said Mr. Kirby, but Millie was picking up her scattered type and the

Jim's Hiding Place

jour' printers exchanged winks as the policeman walked out.

Those very printers, that morning, had threatened to leave the shop if Mr. Kirby took in a new boy who was not a member of their Printers' Union.

"Just you listen to me, boys," Mr. Kirby had said. "There isn't one of you mean enough——" and he told them the whole story.

He was right. Not one of them was mean enough to give up Jim. Their very hearts went out to a fellow who had been shut up unjustly and who had made so daring an escape. It was not at all, they said, as if he had really deserved to be shut up.

XII

THE STOLEN MONEY

WHEN Rodney Nelson parted from Jim, at Kirby's printing office, that morning, he walked away with a strange look of energy and determination on his face. What the meaning of it was did not come out until his mother reached home, after her hard day's work. She was very tired and for once she actually complained and said how hard it was.

"Mother!" instantly burst from Rodney. "That's it. I guess you won't have to work so hard, any more——"

"Why Rodney, what do you mean?"

"I've been at it, all day, mother. I've found people,—found 'em easy,—that'll let us have things to sell. Don't you see? You own your store, and you've cash to start with, and you don't pay rent or clerk hire.

The Stolen Money

Your credit's good and they want to see you about it."

"Rodney!" she exclaimed. "Of course we can! But what made you think of it?"

"It was Jim," said Rodney. "I thought if he could find a way out, I could."

"I won't go out to work any more——" and Mrs. Nelson almost cried as she and her boy went over the particulars of it and she saw how easy it would be.

There were days and days, after that, during which nothing exciting happened, but in each of which a great deal of work was done. Aunt Betty Bronson, in her farmhouse home, passed them in a state of half nervous expectation. There was a kind of daily disappointment, too, until one broad, bright noon when she met Uncle John, at the door, with a face that was almost blazing.

"Letter from Jim!" she exclaimed. "He's safe and they can't catch him."

"Stop right there, Betty," he said. "I

Walled In

don't want to know where he is. I'm glad he's doing well. Don't say any more, now."

"I won't, then," she replied, but it was hard to keep her word.

As for Uncle John, there was something heavy on his mind, for he sat down to his dinner with a face that looked very much as if he were about to be taken sick.

"I know it kind o' hurts him," thought Aunt Betty, "but he ought never to have been so hard on Jim about that money. I never believed Jim took it!"

If Uncle John doubted it, he did not say so, but that was an important day for all of them. Just a little after dinner time, Rodney and his mother were in their store. It was getting to look very business like and several customers had been waited on and had gone out, while Billy looked hard at the things in the show window and remarked, repeatedly:

"Ba-a-a-beh!"

Nobody else was there, therefore, when

The Stolen Money

Millie came hurrying up the back stairs and dashed in, exclaiming:

"Mrs. Nelson! Rodney! One of the men told father the police have found out! Jim's up in the back room, now. They've caught three of the other boys that were with him. Father says he mustn't come back to the shop!"

"He must get out of town!" said Mrs. Nelson, excitedly. "Rodney can go along and help!—He must jump!"

"So they all say," gasped Millie, all out of breath. "Father and the men gave him ten dollars. He hasn't any time to spare. They're watching the shop!"

Rodney had rushed for the back room and there was Jim, looking pretty cool but with a very determined expression gathering around his mouth.

"Jim!" exclaimed Rodney. "I'll be ready in a minute. I can show you how to get out, if we're quick about it."

"All right," said Jim, and he added, to

Walled In

himself: "I want to see Aunt Betty once more, and tell her I didn't do it. Then I'll go somewhere else, where they don't know me. I won't let them take me back to the Island."

In the store, Millie was saying:

"I've come to 'tend shop while Rod's gone. I'd rather, a hundred times, any day, than stand and set type."

"You stay here, then," said Mrs. Nelson, "while I go and get a luncheon-tin filled for them to take along. They mustn't catch Jim!"

It was hardly any time at all before all was ready, but the good-byes were said in a hurry, for Rodney remarked to Jim:

"We can do it, if we're off before any of 'em see us go. We can catch a train and then we're all right."

They had evidently talked it all over before hand, because it was likely to happen, and so they were not altogether taken by surprise when it came.

The Stolen Money

It was not very late in that afternoon when a pair of young fellows were walking along a country road and one of them turned to the other, saying :

"This road takes us right around the village, Rodney. I guess we won't meet anybody but we can cut across a field if we do."

"We can cut before they know who it is," said Rodney, but he felt a great deal more nervousness than Jim was showing, and he looked at him with open admiration.

"I say, Rodney," remarked Jim, half a mile further on, "this isn't night, it's daytime, but it kind o' feels as if the House of Refuge dormitory was only a little way behind me——"

"Hope it isn't catching up," said Rodney.

Jim said nothing, but it was not long before he led the way through a front gate, around through a shrubberied houseyard, and right in at a kitchen door.

"Aunt Betty?" he exclaimed.

Walled In

“Jim!” almost screamed Mrs. Bronson, springing forward to throw her arms around his neck. “You? Here?—O, my boy! My boy! I’m so glad! What would your mother say, if she were alive!—They didn’t catch you, did they?”

“No, Aunt Betty,” said Jim. “This is Rodney Nelson. He isn’t one of the House of Refuge boys. He and his folks helped me. I’ll tell you all about it——”

“Not now!—Not now!” she said, excitedly. “O dear! What shall I do with you! What shall I say to your uncle? It’s awful!”

“I’d say it was!” suddenly broke in a deep, strong voice in the doorway. “Worst thing could ha’ happened to me! Mrs. Bronson, I just don’t want to know it’s Jim. Wish I hadn’t happened to come——”

“Why, Squire,” she said, “it is Jim, and he’s got away from all of ’em.”

“I don’t want to do any such duty,” groaned the Squire. “It’s hard on me to

The Stolen Money

have to take him. I knew his father and his mother.—Wish I wasn't a justice-peace! Who cares what he stole!—That money——”

“That money——” came like an echo, from a voice that was drawing nearer, in the next room.

“John!” shouted Aunt Betty. “You won't have the Squire take Jim?”

“O, Betty!” exclaimed Uncle John. “Why, Squire, I don't know what to say. It's awful!—Tell you what.—I can't, but I must.—Jim never stole a cent.—Betty, do you mind those old, blue jeans overalls?—I had 'em on, that day. When the money was missed, I was so torn up by it, I didn't remember where I'd put 'em. I found 'em, hangin' up in the barn, three days ago, and there was the fifty dollars, in one o' the pockets. I was most sick. O, Jim, I'm a poor, old, miserable sinner! I'm glad you got out——”

“Thank God!” ejaculated the Squire. “I haven't got to do it! Hurrah!”

Walled In

"Hurrah!" shouted Rodney, but Jim could not have said a word, if he had tried, for Aunt Betty was almost choking him.

"It's all right, Bronson," said the Squire. "I'll telegraph to the New York authorities. 'Twon't really hurt Jim, in the long run. I'm going——"

"I'll go, too," said Rodney. "I want to send word to our folks."

"Come right back, Rodney," said Jim.

"I will," said Rodney, but he was hurrying away with the Squire and one of the consequences was that when, just before supper time, Mr. and Mrs. Kirby came over to the Nelson store to ask if there was any news, a telegraph messenger went in with them.

"Read it aloud! What is it?" exclaimed Mrs. Kirby. "Is it from Rod?"

"O, do hear!" said Mrs. Kirby, and she read:

"Mother. We got here. They found the money. Jim's all right. He didn't do it. Tell Millie. Tell everybody."

The Stolen Money

“Whoop!” shouted Mr. Kirby, but his wife was reaching out after the telegram that Mrs. Nelson was waving, like a flag, and Millie was dancing.

“Ba-a-a-beh!” remarked a bearded friend of the family, in the doorway.

Away over on Randall’s Island, in the main office of the House of Refuge, a bright-faced officer was reading a very much longer telegram. When it was completed, he remarked, to a pair of his blue uniformed associates and to another pair who were not in uniform :

“I’m glad he is innocent. I’m glad we did our duty by him.—Well, after all, I’m glad the right boy got away.”

* * * * *

Only a few years have gone by. Only long enough for the new avenue to be built up on both sides. In the middle of the western side is a sign that reads “R. Nelson,” and the Nelson family live under that store.

Walled In

They have frequent visits from a young man they call "Jim," who runs a printing office, in a village about fifty miles up the Hudson. He lives at the Bronson farm, near the village, and when he comes to the city he spends a great deal of his time at the house of Mr. Kirby, the printer, on the other avenue, for he worked in Kirby's shop, once. He told them, at his last visit, of a grand time he had had with a friend of his named Joe, a junior officer on one of the Sound Steamers, who came all the way up there to let him know how well three of their old friends were doing. Boys who once climbed over walls with them and were now sailors in the Navy.

"Rodney," said Jim, "I'm glad, for me and for them, that it turned out just as it did. It was best for all of us. But somehow the whole business makes me think of what I heard the Superintendent say, once, to some of those Managers :

"In prison, and ye visited ME."

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